

SOCIAL CRITICISM IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

by

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INTRODUCTION

In the past fifty years, the drama has become increasingly important as a social factor. Today, few institutions have a wider influence in determining the conduct of men than does the theatre. As the appeal of the church has lessened, the appeal of the drama has increased, and more and more it has come to be a "prompter of conscience" and "an elucidator of social conduct."

To determine the reason for this change in the conception of the drama we need to look back to the philosophic, social, and scientific movements of the last century--to the writings of Nietzsche, John Stuart Mill, Henry George, and Darwin. Traditionally, drama had been based upon the principle of the freedom of the will, and upon the idea that when man trespassed certain immutable moral laws he came into conflict with destiny. Now it became apparent that the freedom of man's will is extremely limited, and that a changeless moral law is an absurdity. Consequently the center of dramatic conflict underwent a change. Man, of his own volition, no longer trespassed fixed laws and was punished by the gods. Instead, Man, because of the forces of environment and heredity, was forced to do certain things that brought him into revolt against society--a society of

outworn customs, unjust laws, and oppressive social conditions.

As a result of this change, dramatists began to see the possibility of utilizing all kinds of material pertaining to social welfare. Society was analyzed, its abuses attacked and its problems discussed. The purpose of this thesis is to study the treatment of these social problems and abuses by the various dramatists usually designated by the term "contemporary."

FORERUNNERS

Before we can fully understand and appreciate the modern drama, we must study its forerunners--forerunners whose roots go back to the conflict between the classical drama with its fundamental conception of fate, and the romantic play based upon the Freedom of the Will. By the end of the eighteenth century the romantic drama had largely triumphed; which is not strange when we consider that this was the age of Rousseau and the French and American Revolutions. The romantic play was concerned with the common interest of man. In Germany the "storm and stress" movement, culminating in the work of Goethe and Shiller, laid one of the cornerstones for modern drama, while in France, Victor Hugo and his fellows led a reaction against the uniform classical tradition

of the French drama. As Dickinson points out, "For our purposes the significance of the struggle between romanticism and classicism lies in the introduction of the motive of revolt into contemporary drama." The revolutionary motive was largely a result of the appearance of the great middle class. The drama had become conscious of class conflict.

But romantic drama as such could not continue. The very nature of it made this impossible. The romantic play was essentially literary, but when the interest in humanity it had aroused became more and more intense, the drama came to have greater popular appeal. Conventions were discarded, verse disappeared in favor of prose, and the romantic play declined as the popular theatre arose.

The first great popularizers of the modern theatre were August von Kotzebue in Germany and Guilbert de Pixerecourt in France. The importance of both lies entirely in the standardization of form that they gave to the new drama. More important than either, however, was Eugene Scribe, who from 1822 until his death in 1861 filled the playhouses with his famous "well-made plays." Scribe was not interested in issues or problems; his sole purpose was to entertain and amuse. His adroit pattern was: first act, exposition; second act, development; third act, denouement. The formula was followed almost exclusively for over three generations.

Victorien Sardou, a follower of Scribe, can probably best be described as a stage craftsman. He was interested neither in problems nor in characterisation. To create emotional effect was his one aim, and towards this end his craftsmanship was directed. He wrote over eighty plays in his lifetime, most of which were "well-made plays" in the manner of Scribe, or historical melodramas written expressly for Madam Sarah Bernhardt.

As a "well-made play" depended upon situation and action, its appeal was universal and it lost little through translation. Consequently the vogue spread all over Europe and America. It was on this foundation that the "commercial theatre" was built.

One of the rules of the school of Scribe was that a play must never present an opinion, or suggest that the playwright had one. As a result of this policy a protest arose from two factions. In his chapter on "The Drama of Ideas" in "An Outline of Contemporary Drama," Dickinson says, "The artists of the theatre objected to the falsehoods and frivolity of the followers of Scribe. And thoughtful citizens charged the stage with a lack of social conscience. They felt that the stage should help in the general tasks of democracy rather than hinder. The play of ideas was the first result of the effort to attach a serious purpose to

the well-oiled mechanism of the well-made play."

Two names stand out in connection with the establishment of the "pièce à thèse" in the theatre of Europe--Alexandre Dumas fils, and Emile Augier. Dumas aligned himself with the romantic liberals, and filled his plays with the ideas, attitudes and catchwords of that party. He was not an original thinker, and his conceptions never exceeded the mental and moral limitations of his audience. Although he was sometimes opposed by the conservatives, he always had a strong liberal following. Augier, on the other hand, was a conservative. While Dumas urged the adoption of new moral and ethical codes, Augier demanded that the old ones be maintained and protected against attack. While Dumas was making a plea for the suffering courtesan (*La Dame aux Camélias*) and outlining the duties of a father toward an illegitimate son (*Le Père prodigue*), Augier was depicting the results of lax ideas upon a young wife (*Les Femmes pauvres*) and pointing out that the courtesan was an intruder who would destroy the home (*La Contagion*, Paul Forestier, and Jean de Thourmeray).

In Germany the social drama was an outgrowth of the activities of the Young Germany party. The most important dramatist of the group was Karl Gutzkow. Although his influence never extended outside of his own country, he greatly affected the work of later German writers.

Although the ideas presented in the thesis play might vary, the form soon became standardized. As the presentation of the idea was the sole purpose of the play, plot was constructed with this end in view, and characters became lay figures or abstractions arranged to present a truism. Two types of characters became especially important: The confidential friend who aided in the presentation of the exposition; and the "Paisanneur," who acted as mouthpiece for the author.

Although the play of ideas, as such, was never an artistic dramatic form, it served its purpose. The romantic and the popular theatre were at opposite extremes. The thesis play interested the more serious groups of society in the stage, and served to make it the medium of expression of the interests, ideas and problems of the people as a whole.

It was in Germany that there first developed an artistic theatre that concerned itself with the realities of every-day life. Heinrich von Kleist, Franz Grillparzer, and Otto Ludwig were all literary men, and were all ignored by the contemporary public. Their importance rests on the fact that they sought to change the conception of conflict upon which drama rests. The thesis play was based upon situations; upon opposition between external forces. The new movement placed the seat of the conflict within the individ-

ual soul. In short, it was the forerunner of the psychological drama.

This movement culminated in the works of Friedrich Hebbel. Speaking of his work, Dickinson says, "Hebbel's situations are planted in character and his characters are identified with universal human nature. He turned the interest of the theatre away from the external and superficial, even from the declamatory and rhapsodic, to the deeper strains of motive and passion that urge both action and speech. His plots were in some respects strained; he put his characters under heavy pressure of circumstance and temptation and then proceeded to observe the soul movements under this pressure. He was fearless in analysis. His exposition amounted almost to exposure. He anticipated Ibsen in respecting and in contending for the integrity of individual human character.

Hebbel's first work, "Judith," is the story from the Apocrypha of Judith and Holofernes. The motives, however, are essentially new, and foreshadow the woman question as discussed by Ibsen and many others toward the end of the century. Again, the enfranchised woman is foreshadowed in Mariamne of "Herodes and Mariamne." In "Marie Magdalene," Hebbel studies a fallen woman in the midst of middle-class self righteousness and bigotry. "Trauerspiel in Sizilien"

is an early tragedy of maladjustment.

Hebbel's greatest contribution to modern drama lies in the psychological validity of his characters under the influence of a complex environment and heredity. The man who developed this validity to its highest point was Henrik Ibsen.

SCANDINAVIA

Henrik Johan Ibsen was born in the little town of Skien, Norway, on March 28, 1828. Although he is usually thought of as the great Norwegian genius, genealogical researches indicate that Ibsen's ancestry was Scotch, Danish, and German. As has been suggested, it would, perhaps, be attaching no undue importance to hereditary influence to attribute the lyric delicacy and sensitiveness of his poetry to the Danish element in his blood, his morality and ethical standards to Scotch influence, and his passion for abstract logic to the German strain.

The house in which Ibsen was born faced an open square, the other sides of which were occupied by the Pillory, the madhouse and lockup, and the Latin and grammar schools. In the middle stood the village church. It is impossible, of course, to estimate the effect of these somber surroundings on the work of the dramatist. The tragic cast of his plays, the reflective nature of his character, and

the absence of the sea and the forest in most of his work, have all been attributed to this somewhat oppressive environment in which he spent his first eight years. Although it undoubtedly left its mark upon him, its importance has probably been over-estimated.

A far more determining factor was the financial catastrophe that overtook his father when Henrik was eight. The family moved to a small house outside of Skien and lived in frugality if not in actual poverty. It was now that the boy first realized the hypocrisy, the shallowness, and the insincerity of society. He afterwards remarked that those who had taken most advantage of his parents' hospitality in their prosperous days were precisely those who now most markedly turned to them the cold shoulder.

It was also at this time that Ibsen's intense individuality began to appear. He devoted himself almost entirely to reading, and later to drawing. His one form of social activity seems to have been playing the part of a magician for the amusement and the mystification of his elders.

The boy showed a good deal of talent for drawing, and desired to become a painter. Instead he was apprenticed at the age of sixteen to an apothecary in Grinestad, a little town of approximately 800 inhabitants.

Ibsen did not wish to become a chemist, and decided to

study medicine at Christiania University. It was while reading Sallust and Cicero for his matriculation examination that he wrote his first play, "Catalina," the proceeds of which were to be used by himself and two friends in a tour of the east. As the play sold only some thirty copies, the tour never materialized.

At Christiania, Ibsen continued to write and finally gave up the intention to study medicine when in 1851 Ole Bull, the famous violinist, gave him an appointment as "theatre poet" at the National Theatre which recently had been established at Bergen. Here Ibsen wrote several plays not usually included in his published work. They were, for the most part, historical and legendary dramas and are significant only in that here and there one finds a hint of ideas and powers to be developed in later works. "Lady Inger of Oestraet," Ibsen's first important play, was produced at the National Theatre in 1855. In 1856 with "The Feast at Solhaug" he achieved his first popular success, probably because the play was in the line of Classic Norwegian development. In 1857 Ibsen was appointed director of the Norwegian Theatre at Christiania and here produced "The Warriors at Helgeland," a version of the Volsung Saga. The play aroused violent opposition on all sides, as did the next, "Love's Comedy," which was taken as an attack on love and

marriage, and which first branded the dramatist as an "immoral" writer. He returned once again to the Sagas and in 1864 there appeared "Kongs-omseren" which is known as "The Pretenders," although a better translation might be "The Stuff from Which Kings Are Made."

Discouraged by the poor reception of his plays, and out of sympathy with the intellectual trends of the country, Ibsen left Norway in 1864 and settled in Rome. Later he moved to Germany and in 1865 returned to his own country. He remained only a short time, however, and then went back to Germany where he lived until 1891. From that time until his death in 1906 he lived in Christiania.

In this paper we are interested primarily in Ibsen's social dramas which begin with "Pillars of Society" or possibly with "The League of Youth." First, however, we should consider briefly the three plays in which, as Shaw puts it, he "takes the field against idealism, and like another Luther, nails his thesis to the door of the Temple of Morality."

The first of these is "Brand," a tragedy of sacrifice to an idealistic dream. Brand is a champion not of things as they are, or even as it is possible for them to be, but of things as they should be. In other words, he is champion of the ideal. But Brand's ideal and his motto of "All or

Nothing" bring only suffering and disaster on all around him. The ideal is frustrated by sordid reality.

The ideal of Peer Gynt, on the other hand, is self-realisation through self-satisfaction and gratification. Peer would be the mighty hunter, the fighter, the knight, and the lover. But he can be these only in illusion. He wanders over the earth imagining himself the hero of all kinds of romantic adventures, only to return in the end a failure fit only to be melted down by the "Great Button Maker."

Archibald Henderson in speaking of these two plays says, "Ibsen's effort is to arouse the world to open its eyes to a freer, richer future, to point out the need for ridding itself of false ideals--ideals which cannot be realized in acts."

Along with "Brand" and "Peer Gynt" we can class "Emperor and Galilee," a tremendous work in two parts of five acts each. The Emperor Julian strives for a reconciliation between pagan beauty and Christian truth. He cannot achieve, however, the "vision splendid" of the "Third Empire, in which the twin natures shall reign"--the ideal towards which Maximus has urged him--and so he dies a failure.

The above three plays are all more or less romantic in

cast, and deal with the effect of idealism on imaginative figures of heroic proportion. But as the results of a blind following of ideals became increasingly clear to Ibsen, he could see its working not only on great romantic figures, but also on the common people of every-day life and on a society composed of these common, every-day people. And so we have the social plays.

"The League of Youth" was written before "Emperor and Galilean" was completed, but it belongs with the social group. The play, a farcical satire, concerns itself with one Stensgaard and his ambition to attain social and political success. It was immediately taken as an attack on the Norwegian Liberal party and as a personal lampoon on Bjornson. Essentially it is an experimental, transitional work. The technical influence of Scribe and his school is still apparent in its artificiality. It does mark, however, the adaption by Ibsen of the terse prose of every-day speech as a medium of dramatic expression. Undoubtedly the most significant character in the play is Selva who foreshadows Nora of "A Doll's House."

If we consider "The League of Youth" as an experimental and transitional play, "Pillars of Society" really opens the social group. Consul Karsten Bernick in maintaining the respectability of his position and of his firm has allowed his brother-in-law to bear the blame for certain of his own

shortcomings. He continues in life to sacrifice everything for materialistic gain and the respect of the community. He is finally forced to confess, and to admit that the spirits of Truth and Freedom are the true pillars of society. Although an advance over "The League of Youth," "Pillars of Society" still shows the influence of Scribe. It is quite conventional both in treatment and solution; wrong prevails for awhile, but in the end right triumphs. In reality it is a moral melodrama.

As Bernard Shaw points out, "Pillars of Society," as a propaganda play, is disabled by the circumstance that the hero, being a fraudulent hypocrite in the ordinary police-court sense of the phrase, would hardly be accepted as a typical pillar of society in the class he represents. Accordingly, Ibsen took care next time to make his idealist irreproachable from the standpoint of the ordinary idealist morality." Helmer, the master of "A Doll's House," is a model husband. He does all he can for his doll, but being a doll isn't enough for Nora. She awakens to the realization that social conventions, and the traditions of the sheltered life, have prevented her from developing her personality. At the very play where the well-made play would end by having Nora fly into Helmer's arms, the two sit down to a discussion of marriage, and Nora subsequently flies out the door.

In "Ghosts," Ibsen answers those who contended that Nora should have remained with her husband at all costs. Helen Alving follows the wifely ideal of self-sacrifice and remains with her husband in spite of everything. As a result her son inherits disease from his father and in the end becomes insane. Ibsen does not contend, of course, that Helmer and Captain Alving are much alike, or even that Nora and Mrs. Alving resemble each other to any marked degree. He is interested merely in showing the tragic results of the blind following of conventional morality in marriage.

"Ghosts" shows a great advance in the retrospective method which Ibsen was coming more and more to follow. The significant action is all in the past: little by little the characters tell the story, and when it is told the play is over.

Probably no other play in history has caused the furor that "Ghosts" occasioned. In England the hue and cry were especially loud. The play was described as "an open drain; a loathsome sore unbandaged; a dirty act done publicly; a lazar-house with all its doors and windows open." Ibsen was termed, "A crazy, cranky being. . . . Not only consistently dirty but deplorably dull" and his admirers branded as "Lovers of prurience and dabblers in impropriety who are eager to gratify their illicit tastes under the pretense of art." All this was bound to have its effect upon Ibsen, and in the

next year he literally dashed off "An Enemy of the People." Of all his plays this is the most prosaic, the most satiric, and the most scornful. Dr. Stockman finds that the water of the baths at a famous health resort contains impurities, but the people, thinking only of the financial cost, denounce the doctor for exposing the condition. The implication is, of course, that Ibsen exposed the impurities of society and was denounced for telling the truth. The people, however, missed the point and the play proved quite popular. It was well received in Norway, was presented at the court theatres of Berlin and Vienna, and in France and Spain was used by the anarchists as a revolutionary manifesto.

In "The Wild Duck," Ibsen points out the danger of blindly following any ideal, even the ideal of truth which he himself might advocate. He asks if the average person is capable of facing the unmasked truth; if illusion isn't the only thing that makes life bearable. Gregor Werle, who insists on marriage based upon the ideal of mutual confession and understanding, is undoubtedly an ironic self-portrait. The work confused many of Ibsen's followers as it seemed a negation of the earlier plays. Now it is apparent that it is merely another step in his crusade against blind idealism.

As "The League of Youth" marks the transition from the

period of French influence to the period of the Social plays, so "Rosmersholm" marks the turning point from the Social to the Psychological group. As William Archer points out in his introduction to the play, "In all these (the social plays) the individual is treated, more or less explicitly, as a social unit, a member of a class, an example of some collective superstition, injustice, or stupidity." From now on, Ibsen becomes more and more interested in pure psychology and in the development of character rather than in the solution of problems. "Rosmersholm" is a study of the evolution of two souls under the oppressive weight of the past. Technically the play is the finest of Ibsen's. In it the retrospective method reaches its highest point.

"The Lady from the Sea" is usually classed as Ibsen's weakest play. But it is also his most poetic and charming. Ellida Wangel cannot free herself from a mysterious attraction until her husband gives her a free choice between himself and the stranger. She is then able to shake off the attraction. It is Ibsen's first attempt to arrive at abstract truth through drama, the truth that a person must be free in order to make a choice.

When Ibsen's next play appeared, a sigh of relief went up from many of his followers. The weaknesses of "The Lady of the Sea" had caused many to fear that the master was failing. The new play, however, showed that the power was

still there. "Hedda Gabler" is a searching study of character. Ibsen, himself, said of it: "It was not my purpose to deal with what people call problems in this play. What I chiefly tried to do was to paint human beings, human emotions, and human fate against a background of some of the conditions and laws of society as it exists today." Dr. Brandes says of it: "Of all Ibsen's work, Hedda Gabler is the most detached, the most objective--a character study pure and simple. It is impossible--or so it seems to me--to extract any sort of general idea from it."

With "The Master Builder" Ibsen definitely enters his final period--a period of symbolism and abstract truth. Halvard Solness deserts his highest aspirations, but in the end is confronted by them and they bring about his ruin. The play is full of symbolism some of which is rather obscure. As a result it has had all kinds of meanings read into it that the author probably never intended.

The three last plays, "Little Eyolf," "John Gabriel Berkman," and "When We Dead Awaken," clearly show the weakening of power. The symbolism is oppressive, and the characters often become mere puppets arranged for presenting a truth, usually the truth that tragedy comes of self-sacrifice and self-denial. They cannot be classed with Ibsen's best or most influential work.

Ibsen once wrote to Bjornsen. "So to conduct one's

life as to realize one's self, this is the loftiest attainment of man." In this we have the keynotes of his work-- "individualism" and "self-realization." In another letter he declared: "The principal thing is not to will one thing rather than another, but to will that which one is absolutely impelled to will, because one is oneself and cannot do otherwise. Anything else will drag us into deception." Thus he shifts the center of morality from the external to internal. It is from this conception that his attack upon social ideals and conventional morals arises.

If man's conduct is, and must be, determined from within, and if the appreciation of this fact, and hence self-realization, is the "loftiest attainment of man," then any attempt to impose restrictions from without in the form of moral and ethical codes is apt to end in disaster. Ibsen's tragedies are the tragedies of men and women who have sacrificed the realization of themselves to the external ideals of materialism, altruism, or conventionality.

George Bernard Shaw in his "Quintessence of Ibsenism" has summed up the Norwegian dramatist's attitude towards ideals. He says: "In short, our ideals like the gods of old are constantly demanding human sacrifices. Let none of them, says Ibsen, be placed above the obligation to prove itself worth the sacrifices it demands; and let everyone religiously refuse to sacrifice himself and others from the

moment he loses his faith in the validity of the ideal. What Ibsen insists on is that there is no golden rule; that conduct must justify itself by its effect upon life and not by its conformity to any rule or ideal. And since life consists in the fulfillment of the will, which is constantly growing, and cannot be fulfilled today under the conditions which secured its fulfillment yesterday, he claims afresh the old Protestant right of private judgment in questions of conduct as against all institutions, the so-called Protestant churches, themselves included."

Studies have been made of the influence of Ibsen upon other dramatists, but it is impossible, of course, to even estimate the effect of his plays upon the great mass of people and upon the social structure. This is especially true in America, since the influence of the plays seems to have been considerable less in this country than in most of the European nations. But whatever his influence, it is not likely to decrease. Ibsen did not discuss specific or temporary subjects. The problems he discussed are still with us, and the truths that he presented still hold. Nor are they apt to be seen invalidated. As Ludwig Lewisohn has pointed out: "Democracy which began by liberating man politically has developed a dangerous tendency to enslave him through the tyranny of majorities and the deadly power of

their opinion. These majorities pass restrictive laws which sap the moral fibre of society and seek to reduce it to the standards of its most worthless elements. They abhor the free and self-originating soul--the solitary thinker, fighter, reformer, saint--and exalt the colorless product of the uniform herd. In a society face to face with such dangers the words of Ibsen have inestimable service to perform. They will continue to shape free personalities and help such personalities to find themselves."

Bjornstjerne Bjornson, Ibsen's countryman, friend, and rival was born in 1832 in Kvikne, Norway. As a young man he attended Christiania University where he knew Ibsen. After his graduation in 1852, he began writing novels of peasant life, of which "Synnove Solbakken" and "Arne" are the best known. In 1857 he became director of the Bergen playhouse, following the incumbency of Ibsen, and in 1858 was appointed to a similar position in the Christiania Theatre.

Playwriting never became a dominant activity in Bjornson's life. It was always secondary to his interest in lecturing, novel writing, and statecraft. His early plays, like Ibsen's, were romantic, historical dramas. Later he became more of a realist and concerned himself with various problems of the country.

Three of his plays discuss marital relationships,

problems, and adjustments. "The Newly Married" is a frankly didactic drama pointing out that a couple must learn patience and the obligation of marriage in order to successfully establish their life together. "Geography of Love" portrays a husband who, because of devotion to his work, neglects his wife. "When the New Wine Blooms" presents the reverse--a wife who neglects her husband because of her absorption in her children and the affairs of her household.

We can group together three more of his plays as attacks on the holders of various tyrannical powers. In all of these the focus is on the social condition and not on the individual. "The Editor" attacks the mis-used power of the press; "The King," the tyranny of monarchy and its upholders; and "The New System," the unscrupulous practices of the capitalists.

"A Gauntlet" attacks the double standard of sex morality. When Svava, the heroine, finds that her fiancee has had a mistress, she breaks their engagement and throws a glove in his face. The problem interested Bjornson, and he made much the same plea for male chastity in his lecture "Polygamy and Menogamy," and in his novel "The Heritage of the Kurts."

Parts I and II of "Beyond Human Power" are really two separate plays written twelve years apart. Part I, written in 1883, is a study of faith, and is undoubtedly Bjornson's

finest dramatic work. Pastor Sang works miracles and is able to heal everyone except his wife. As she lacks faith in his power to cure her, his efforts have been fruitless. He determines, however, to go into the church and not to return until she sleeps and is healed. The wife does sleep and afterwards walks. But she has done it in love for her husband rather than in faith and the strain kills her. When Sang realises this, he too dies. The lesson, if we may call it that, is that it is dangerous to will that which is beyond human power or strength to perform.

In Part II, Sang's children have inherited a fortune, and are attempting to bring about a social reform. Rachel has established a hospital, and Elias is aiding the workmen in a strike against Holgar, a leader among the capitalists. The strikers resort to violence and as a result Holgar shoots down Elias and in turn is maimed for life when his castle is blown up. But all is in vain. Sang is dead; Holgar is a cripple for life; and the workmen are in an even worse condition than they were before. Like his father, Elias has attempted more than it is humanly possible to accomplish. Rachel, realising that improvement of the social condition must come through love rather than violence, joins with the niece and nephew of the crippled capitalist in working out a model community based upon this principle.

Bjornson was not a powerful original thinker. His

optimism and enthusiasm were likely to get the better of his reason and cause him to overlook many important considerations. When he discovered an evil he set about to attack it without paying any attention to the causes and conditions that were responsible for its origin. As a result his work is not always convincing.

His chief defects, however, are his inability to delve deeply into the human soul, and the lack (except in Part I of "Beyond Human Power") of the "high seriousness" which all great drama must possess.

In August Strindberg we find the tragic figure of a bitterly disillusioned idealist. The son of an irregular union, his childhood was spent in pain. The brutality and squalor of his home life undoubtedly account for many of the violent characteristics he later displayed. As a man, he was no more able to find domestic peace and happiness than he had found as a boy. He was married three times, and was three times divorced. His interest was chiefly in science, especially chemistry, and from this he verged into mysticism and spiritualism. Probably no one will ever know for certain whether or not Strindberg was actually demented. It is certain, however, that he presented a shining example of genius closely akin to insanity.

Like Ibsen, Strindberg began by writing romances. From

these he shifted to naturalistic pieces, and finally to symbolic ones. It is in the second group that we are interested for it is in these that he revolted against the intellectual and sociological movements of the period--chiefly, the feminist. Strindberg believed that women were physically, mentally, and morally inferior to men. As long as the woman recognized this inferiority and retained her traditional position as wife and mother, domestic harmony would reign. But as soon as she stepped out of her place, demanded equality with man, and began to babble of comradeship, then strife would begin.

The bitterness of these naturalistic plays arises in part from the author's painful experiences in marriage. The women he married were as far from his ideal as are the women in his dramas. All were selfish, self-seeking, and determined to profit at his expense. All of the plays of this group contain elements of autobiography: the pain of the play is born in the pain of the playwright. "His art," says Lewisohn, "the art of 'The Father' (1887), 'Comrades' (1888), 'Miss Julia' (1888), 'Creditors' (1890), 'The Link' (1897), is the most joyless in the world. There is no lifting of the soul to a larger vision from the bondage of immediate pain. That is his limitation. It may be urged, on the other hand, that the pain he describes is so keen and absorbing that it gives his characters no chance to fight their way to

the breathing of an ampler air. And that, too, is life. For he has chosen to depict the cruellest malady of the age--the malady that has stolen into the ancient and honorable relations of the woman to the man." All of the above plays deal with a struggle between the sexes--a struggle that must continue as long as woman refuses to submit to the authority of man.

In "The Father," perhaps Strindberg's greatest naturalistic play, a cavalry captain and his wife, Laura, war over the destiny of their daughter, Bertha. When the captain asserts his right as father to send his daughter away to school, Laura suggests that perhaps Bertha is not his daughter. The idea fixes itself in the captain's mind and nearly drives him insane with doubt. Laura, wishing to be rid of him, sets an alienist to observing him, and then does all she can to drive him mad. Finally everyone is convinced of his demented state, and his old nurse by means of a trick slips a strait-jacket on him. The captain rails against women and finally dies of apoplexy while the wife stands triumphantly by. Man is defeated in the battle of the sexes because he is bounded by codes of fair play, while women will stoop to any means in order to attain their ends. Although possessing several rather glaring weaknesses, such as the alienist's ready acceptance of Laura's story without

personal observation, the play possesses great power. It falls short of great tragedy in that the captain is a pitiful weakling.

"Comrades" displays professional antagonism between man and wife. Axel does back-work so that his wife can devote herself to her masterpiece. He even signs her name to one of his pictures for the salon so that she will have the satisfaction of being accepted there. The wife is unappreciative, however, and scornful of her husband. Axel, realizing that there will never be anything but strife between them, leaves with another woman, this time a sweetheart. He says that he wants to meet his comrades at an inn, and that at home he wants a wife.

In "Miss Julia," the struggle is between a girl of the decadent aristocracy, and a serving-man of the lower class. Julia flirts with a serving-man in her father's house. He warns her that she may go too far, but in the end carries her off to his room. When they return, Julia is repentant, and the serving-man is the arrogant master. He orders her to steal her father's cash, so that they may elope to Switzerland. Then, changing his mind, he decides to leave her behind. When she pleads with him, he puts his razor into her hand and suggests that she cut her throat. She does so. Although she is defeated, Julia is a typical Strindberg heroine. From her mother, who was an ardent feminist, she has

inherited a hatred of men, which is overcome only by lust.

"Creditors" presents Strindberg's belief that in marriage the man is always the creditor. *Thekla* has mentally and spiritually exhausted two husbands. The first takes revenge upon her by presenting her true nature to the second. And then when she tries to slip back into his arms, he laughs at her and at her weakling second husband who respects women.

In "The Link," we see a baron and his wife in the divorce court. Both are seeking the welfare of their child, but they cannot refrain arguing bitterly and testifying against each other, and as a result, the child is put in the care of two ignorant peasants who are on the jury.

All of these plays are terrible in their denouncement of the "modern" woman, and of the feminist movement, its ideals, and its catchwords. Other of Strindberg's plays that deal with the warfare between the sexes are: "The Dance of Death," "Facing Death," "Simoon," and "There Are Crimes and Crimes." His philosophy of the conflict of life is best expressed in his symbolic "The Dream Play."

RUSSIA

The Russian drama has been largely overshadowed by the Russian novel, although it contains many of the qualities that made the latter famous. The development of the theatre

in Russia has not been marked with periods of artificiality, such as the era of the "well-made play" in the rest of Europe. It has been, from the first, a theatre of realism in which the drama is closely allied to the life and the spirit of the people. The Russian mind is introspective and questioning, and hence the drama is marked by a search for ultimates--for the value, the meaning and the significance of life.

Although Leo Tolstoy at one time despised the drama, he came to see its value as an instrument for the presenting of social doctrines and propaganda. All of his plays were written with a definite purpose or problem in mind. "The Power of Darkness" pictures the squalid condition of the peasants, while "The Fruits of Enlightenment" depicts the follies of the luxurious life of the upper classes. The effects of drink are portrayed in "The Cause of It All" and "The First Distiller." "The Living Corpse," which is also known as "Resurrection," "The Man Who Was Dead," and "Redemption," deals with the need of reform in the divorce law, and the ineffectiveness of the law in general, especially in its relations to civil life.

"The Powers of Darkness" has won the greatest acceptance in Europe. It is a sordid story in the naturalistic manner relating the progress, or rather the decline, of

Nitika from one horrible crime to another until he finally finds peace in imprisonment.

In America, "The Living Corpse" is probably the best known of Tolstoy's plays. Fedis, a spiritual weakling, deserts his wife and is willing to give her a divorce so that she can marry Victor, a family friend. He is unable, however, to bring himself to go through the degrading details necessary under Russian law to give his wife grounds. He then attempts suicide, but is also unsuccessful at that. Finally, he writes his wife a farewell note and leaves his coat on a river bank, thus giving the impression that he has drowned himself. When his wife learns of his "suicide," she soon marries Victor. It is discovered, however, that the supposed dead man is still alive, and Victor and Lisa are dragged into court charged with bigamy. When Fedis finds that their marriage will be annulled and that they will be imprisoned, he is able to summon up courage to shoot himself. It is the old theme of spiritual regeneration accompanying physical and material deterioration.

Maxim Gorki has written one play that may be classed as dramatically great. "The Night Refuge" or "The Lower Depths," as it is usually called in England and America, is perhaps the ultimate in naturalism. The scene is an underground lodging place in which live, or rather exist, prosti-

tutes, thieves, drunken actors, ruined noblemen, petty tradesmen and disease ridden women. What little plot there is consists of the efforts of the thief to rid himself of his surroundings and his "profession" and to start life anew with the sister-in-law of the landlord, but for the most part the play merely presents the quarrels, the fights, and the petty intrigues that make up the squalid daily existence of this group of outcasts.

Gorki had no use for sentimental weaklings such as Fedja of "The Living Corpse." He preferred the man who had known defeat, and in it had found strength rather than "romantic pessimism."

In the plays of Anton Tchekhov, naturalistic drama finds its most artistic expression. While Tolstoy wrote of peasants, and Gorki of the city outcasts, the people of Tchekhov are of the cultured intellectual class--a class that is conscious of its impotency and futility. Their weary conversation surrounds them with the heavy atmosphere of disillusionment and despair. More than either Tolstoy or Gorki, Tchekhov searches deeply for the purpose and meaning of existence. Stern Jameson in discussing this quality of his work says: "Whereas Tolstoy and Gorki sought the meaning in an ideal of life that a social revolution might accomplish, Tchekhov reached deeper to question the value of life

to criticise its form. In this, his dramatic ideal differs from that of the drama of ideas. Mr. Shaw, master of that form, criticises manners: the drama of ideas, as a whole, criticises conditions: its value is, in consequence, constantly decreasing. Its present importance, being a question of knowledge of conditions, is limited by the quality of the intellect behind it as much as by the quality of dramatic art in its expression. At best, it is not reality but a phase of reality. The drama of Tchekhov is the only modern realism that has attempted a vision of reality. For reality is not a matter of facts: it is a matter of artistic conception."

"The Cherry Orchard" is probably Tchekhov's greatest play, and is, in this country at least, certainly his best known. A brother and sister return to their family home which is involved in financial difficulties. Lopachin, the wealthy son of a serf, suggests that they cut down their cherry orchard and subdivide the land on which it stands as sites for suburban villas. They refuse the advice, however, and cling to the orchard as a symbol of their aristocracy. Finally, it is put up at auction, and is bought by Lopachin himself. The brother and sister sadly depart, and as the last of the servants is locking up the mansion which is soon to be torn down, he hears the sound of an axe. The great cherry orchard is already being felled.

Dealing with the same theme of the aristocratic family in poverty, "The Three Sisters" presents the pessimistic picture of the futile efforts of the son and the three daughters of General Proscorev to escape from their drab, commonplace, everyday existence. "The Sea Gull" and "Uncle Vanya" deal with the family in relation to love. The theme of both is the waste of life and the sadness of living.

Leonid Andreyev has become known in America chiefly through the popularity of his "He Who Gets Slapped." His plays are poetic, symbolic, and always spectacular. As one critic has said: "He has attempted to make drama of the activities of the soul, and the result has been a pageant of terrible and gorgeous effects." His characters are often mere puppets in the hands of supernatural forces. His thinking is not profound, nor his understanding deep, although he strives for the effect of both. His plays are impressive, but intellectually unconvincing. Chief among his works are "The Life of Man," "King Hunger," and "Anathema."

GERMANY

Gerhart Hauptmann, in a bit of lyrical verse, once wrote, "Let thy soul, O poet, be like an Aeolian harp, stirred by the gentlest breath. Eternally must its strings vibrate under the breathing of the world's woe. For the

world's woe is the root of our heavenward yearning. Thus will thy songs be rooted in the world's woe, but the heavenly light will shine upon their crown." These few lines probably better than others describe the attitude of the great German poet and dramatist towards his work.

Hauptmann, who is the most significant writer of modern Germany, has worked in many literary forms. Here we are concerned only with his naturalistic dramas. Writing of "world's woe," it is not strange that he should choose naturalism as his method in his more serious plays. Nor is it strange that he should abandon the artificialities and conventions of the traditional dramatic structure. Ludwig Lewisohn in a discussion of Hauptmann's work has said, "It follows that his fables are simple and devoid of plot, that comedy and tragedy must inhere in character, and that conflict must grow from the clash of character in its totality. In other words: Since the unwonted and adventurous are rigidly excluded, dramatic complication can but rarely, with Hauptmann, proceed from action. For the life of man is woven of 'little, nameless, unremembered acts' which possess no significance except as to illustrate character and thus, link by link, forge that fate which is identical with character. The constant and bitter conflict in the world does not arise from pointed and opposed notions of honor and duty held at some rare climactic moment, but from the far more

tragic grinding of a hostile environment upon man or of the imprisonment of alien souls in the cage of some social bondage."

The dominant theme of two of Hauptmann's naturalistic dramas is the influence of heredity. "Before Sunrise," one of his earliest plays, relates the story of a girl who kills herself because her lover, fearing that she has inherited a tendency to vice from her debauched father which in turn might be inherited by their children, deserts her. Although the play has some power, it is revolting and often unconvincing. "The Festival of Peace" is less sordid, but is little more convincing, although Hauptmann does attempt to arrive at a solution. The solution is that some outer force may enable the second generation to conquer the defects inherent in the family.

"Drayman Henschel" and "The Weavers" exhibit the influence of environment rather than heredity. The latter of these is Hauptmann's greatest drama. It is a play without a hero and without a plot. The author does not attempt to point out a moral or spread propaganda. He merely presents, in a series of scenes of unsurpassed realism, the misery and despair of the workers, and their subsequent futile revolt against the greedy manufacturers.

"Lonely Lives" is a psychological study somewhat similar to "Reimersholm," and shows Hauptmann's indebtedness to

the Norwegian master. It lacks the power of Ibsen's plays, however, chiefly because of the weakness and vagueness of the characters.

Among the plays which Chandler calls "dramas of modified naturalism" we may place "Michael Kramer," "Colleague Crampton," "Rose Bernd," "The Beaver Coat," "The Conflagration," and "The Rats."

Far more clever and popular than Hauptmann, and far less significant, is Hermann Sudermann. Following the method of Dumas, fils, he has, with skillful craftsmanship, constructed plays that give the impression of being profound intellectual attacks upon outworn ideals and conventions. Like Dumas, Sudermann learned the value of using the catchwords of the liberal classes, and like him is careful never to go beyond the intellectual and moral limits of his audience. He has gained much notoriety through his use of seemingly audacious subjects, chiefly those of adultery and seduction.

In his "Honor," Sudermann discusses various codes and comes to the conclusion that honor must be an individual matter, attainable only by the person who is rational and free. "Magda" and "The Destruction of Sodom" have been very popular because they both have stellar feminine roles which make them good repertoire pieces. The former con-

cerns a rather unconvincing woman who demands the right to live her own life. The latter is a satire upon the corruption in the socially elite classes of Berlin. "The Joy of Living," "The Flower Boat," and "A Good Reputation" also deal with high life in the capital city. "The Battle of the Butterflies" and "Sturm-Brother Socrates" are both comedies laid in Sudermann's native East Prussia. Both show more sincerity, observation, and true character drawing than most of his plays. One presents a study of lower middle-class respectability, and the other a discussion of political and racial issues.

Arthur Schnitzler can scarcely be classed as a social dramatist in the usual sense of the term. He has no lesson to preach, and, with the possible exception of "The Mate and "Free Game," no problem, as such, to discuss. His dramatic motive is love. His theme is the necessity of illusion in our quest of happiness, harmony, and peace; his tragedy, the certainty of disillusion. The plays all have a peculiar beauty--half sorrowful, half cynical. Among the best of Schnitzler's works are "Light of Love," "The Call of Life," and the seven one-act plays known as "Anatol."

At the opposite extreme is Frank Wedekind, a reformer whose passion causes his work to be confused and sometimes practically incoherent. "Spring's Awakening," his one play

that approaches greatness, deals with the sex problems of the adolescent.

FRANCE

Eugene Brieux is the outstanding example of what is sometimes called the "platform dramatist." In reality he is scarcely a dramatist at all, but a lecturer and pamphleteer who has discovered that the stage affords an excellent means for the dissemination of his propaganda. As a vehicle for his sermonizing he has invented the didactic play--a form as rigid as that of the older "well-made play." In act one the problem is presented; in act two its consequences are exhibited; and in act three it is discussed and moralized upon. The problems treated run the gamut from wet-nursing to religion.

It is apparent that the didactic play of Brieux has little to commend it artistically. The structure is stereotyped and the characters are mere lay figures that spout the sociological philosophy of their creator. Furthermore, Brieux is not a profound student or a deep thinker. He ignores many considerations inherent in the questions he discusses, and after three acts of harangue arrives only at obvious platitudes. Now as Ludwig Lewisohn has observed, "The real problem usually begins where the platitudes end. When the subject under discussion is a comparatively simple and

narrow one, such as gambling, the play may be convincing. But as they become increasingly complex, M. Brieux flounders and his platitudes become increasingly inane and ineffectual."

The point is not that the discussion of problems has no place in the artistic drama. We have seen that this is untrue in the works of Ibsen, Tolstoy, and Hauptmann. It is rather the method of treatment that determines whether or not the piece is worthy of being called art. Ibsen and Brieux both considered hereditary disease, but look at the difference between "Ghosts" and "Damaged Goods." The one is great tragedy, the other, mere propaganda in dramatic form. As Storm Jameson has pointed out, "Pain, horror and disease, the shame of forced childbirth, anything of human significance, anything capable of distinctive treatments is fit subject for drama, so that its treatments ennoble life, not merely deprecate. But let it be drama, an expression of personality, not a confused and haphazard lecture."

In America, at least, "The Red Robe" and "Damaged Goods" are Brieux's best known plays. "The Red Robe assails the French criminal system. The honest and conscientious lawyer fails; the unscrupulous one succeeds; magistrates hasten trials in order to attend to private interests; arrests are made at random to satisfy the public. Almost

every possible kind of legal injustice is depicted. "Justice is free," says one of the characters, "but the means of attaining it are not."

"Damaged Goods" tells the fable of Georges Dupont, who, against his physician's advice, marries Henriette. As a result their child inherits the disease from which the father suffers. When Henriette discovers this, divorce seems imminent, but the physician dissuades her and her irate father, and in typical Brieux manner delivers a lecture on the need for reform in such matters.

In other plays Brieux discusses heredity ("The Escape"); the evils of the political system ("The Machine"); education of the lower classes ("Blanchette"); charity ("The Philanthropists"); gambling among the lower classes ("The Results of Racing"); marriages of convenience ("The Three Daughters of M. Dupont"); wet-nursing ("The Substitutes"); decrease in the birth rate ("Maternity"); the French character ("The French Woman"); and religion ("Religion").

Considerably more of an artist than Brieux is M. Paul Hervieu. Although often mentioned together, their work is essentially different. While Brieux is interested with the sociological problems of his time, it is with certain moral conceptions, and with these along, that Hervieu is concerned. He begins with an abstract idea and develops it

throughout the play with pure logic, although occasionally his final acts get out of hand and deteriorate into melodrama. Since his interest is wholly in his thesis, his characters are lifeless and his dialogue often stilted and unreal. The plays do have a certain cold, reserved beauty, but their author lacks large dramatic vision, inspiration or power.

Lewisohn divides the plays of Hervieu into three groups: "those in which he seeks to illustrate universal moral truths; those in which he attacks a false moral idea embodied in an unjust law; those in which he dissects the romantic traditions of our emotional life."

In the first group we have "Words Remain," "The Passing of the Torch," and "The Labyrinth." The first of these is a tale of how slander causes unhappiness and finally death; the second shows the sacrifice of one generation to the next; and the third points out that divorce is morally impossible if there be children concerned.

In the second group in which belong "The Nippers" and "The Law of Man," Hervieu attacks the dominance of the male in marriage. Both plays depict unhappily married couples who are forced to remain together because the husband is unwilling to give his consent to divorce. Both are likewise attacks on the French conception of marriage as a social insti-

tution rather than a union of two individuals.

"The Awakening" and "Know Thyself," which constitute the third and final group, deprecate two deeply rooted romantic conceptions--the beauty of romantic love, and the nobility of romantic honor.

ENGLAND

With the renaissance of the English drama in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the names of Henry Arthur Jones and Arthur Wing Pinero are invariably connected. Considered by any absolute standard, neither one approaches greatness. As transitional figures in the development of the modern English drama, both are of considerable significance. They were the first to defy puritanism, and to exercise the playwright's prerogative of choosing whatever subject he may please as dramatic material. More than others they helped to liberate the English stage from the tyranny of the French "well-made play" and the inaneness of the "home-made" melodrama.

Jones won his first success with "The Silver King," 1882, a blatant melodrama in the manner of Robertson. The idea, however, was much superior to the average English play of the period. In the next few years he wrote many plays, which, although highly melodramatic, showed observation and a tendency to criticize the hypocrisies of the middle class

and the clergy.

The influence of Ibsen upon Jones is seen more in the technical perfection of his work rather than in any marked advance in ideas. He lacked the depth of intellect and the creative dramatic power to successfully follow the Norwegian.

Jones' best work is found in one tragic drama and in two social satires. "Michael and His Lost Angel" tells the story of the Rev. Michael Peversham, who forces the daughter of his secretary to publicly confess her sin, and then commits the same sin himself, with a Mrs. Audrie Lendon. He finally confesses to his congregation, and leaves for Rome to prepare to join the Catholic church. He is unable to find peace, however, without his "lost angel," and as he is in despair, Audrie appears on the scene and dies in his arms. The play ends with Michael's cry to the priest: "Take me! I give my life, my will, my soul, to you! Do what you please with me! . . . Only persuade me that I shall meet her again!" The many faults of the piece are self-evident--the shallowness of the idea; the artificiality of the structure; and the insincerity and unreality of the dialogue. Its worth lies in the fact that it makes an attempt to show the struggles of a human soul. It falls short of tragedy in the weakness of its characters.

"The Case of Rebellious Susan," a social satire that ap-

preaches farce, relates how Susan Harabin, when she learns of her husband's infidelity, decides to retaliate in kind. If her husband expects her to excuse him, then he should be willing to pardon her. The rebellion, however, is unsuccessful, and Susan returns to her spouse. The moral of the play, as well as that of "The Liars," the other one of the social satires, is that society must adhere to certain rules and regulations, against which individual revolution is ineffective and sometimes disastrous.

The plays of Sir Arthur Wing Pinero are superior to those of Jones. His logic is better, and his characters are more believable, chiefly because their dialogue and the situations in which they are placed are less artificial and theatrical. His works "play well" and on the stage have considerable power. In reality, however, they have little significance except as liberating influences upon the English drama. Like Jones, Pinero is not a deep thinker, and his ideas are quite ordinary and conventional.

"The Second Mrs. Tanqueray," usually considered Pinero's best play, questions whether a woman "with a past" can gain respectability through marriage. Aubrey Tanqueray, knowing all about Paula's former affairs, marries her, thinking that she can live down her past. The results are miserable. Paula is bored; the neighbors refuse to have anything to do

with them; Eileen, Aubrey's daughter by a former marriage, scorns her step-mother; and Aubrey worries about the effect of his wife upon his daughter. Finally, just as the first promise of a little harmony appears, it develops that Eileen's recently acquired lover has at one time "kept house" with Paula. Eileen discovers what she has long suspected about her step-mother, and Paula, realizing the futility of it all, shoots herself. And so Pinere answers his question in the negative. One outstanding fact, however, invalidates the answer. The failure of the marriage is not so much due to Paula's past as it is to certain of her characteristics. For Paula, as Pinere has drawn her, has little to commend her. She is selfish, jealous, unappreciative, unable to bear adversity, and generally quite common. It seems doubtful if her marriage to Aubrey could have succeeded even if her reputation had been spotless.

In the far inferior, "The Profligate," Pinere reverses the order and inquires if a man who has been much given to immoral living can find happiness in marriage. Again the answer is the negative.

Other problem plays by Pinere are: "The Notorious Mrs. Ebbamith," which demonstrates the folly of free love; "Mid-Channel," depicting perils of marriage for middle-aged couples; "The Benefit of the Doubt," showing the foolishness of

divorce; and "Lady Bountiful" and "His House in Order," dealing with the question of second marriage.

The fame of Jones and Pinero seems bound to rapidly decrease. The first reason for this is that their problems and their people are too small, too petty, to stand the trying test of time. The second is, that as the critical standards of the drama become more rigid, as they seem bound to, the work of the two English "dramatists of the transition" will be relegated to a lower place.

In her "Modern Drama in Europe," Storm Jameson in characteristic manner has dismissed the work of the pair as follows: "The reason of their failure is not far to seek. Incapable of original thought, of the supreme power that alone can create great character, they seized the framework of Ibsen's drama to fill it with borrowed thoughts and little people. Where they attempted a drama revolt, it sank from man's spiritual struggle against the forces of death to a story of his entanglements with law, judicial and moral. The first belongs to the realm of the spirit; the second to the Assize Court or the Methodist Church. The people of this drama are creatures of their time and their peculiar social surrounding. They never rise above it, and as conditions pass the people lose what little interest they had."

To the conventional moralising of Jones and Pinero, the

society dramas of Oscar Wilde offer decided contrast. Considerably more of an artist than either, Wilde does not concern himself with social problems and evils, nor with psychological studies. It is merely here and there with a brilliant epigram that he strikes sharply at some sham of society or some delusion of popular thought. On social philosophy, for instance--"Our East End is a very important problem." "Quite so, it is the problem of slavery. And we are trying to solve it by amusing the slaves." Or concerning women--"The history of woman is the history of the worst form of tyranny the world has ever known--the tyranny of the weak over the strong." Or perhaps even Hester's outburst on English society--"You have lost life's secret. Oh, your English society seems to me shallow, selfish, foolish. It has blinded its eyes and stopped its ears. It lies like a leper in purple. It sits like a dead thing smeared with gold."

It would be of no purpose to relate the plots of Wilde's four important social comedies--"Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," "The Importance of Being Earnest," and "An Ideal Husband." All are artificial plays largely in the manner of Sardou. Their artistry, their brilliance, and their clarity of thought make them outstanding.

Storn Jameson has noted that "it is curious that En-

gland's justification for her dramatic existence during the past century should rest on Irish wit." For George Bernard Shaw, like Oscar Wilde, is from Ireland. Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856, and at an early age was forced to go to work in a land agent's office. His chief interests, however, were music and art. In 1876, he joined his mother in London, and for the next few years devoted himself with indifferent success to several occupations. After various attempts to earn an honest living, he gave up trying to commit what he believes was a sin against his nature. Between 1879 and 1884 he wrote five novels, all of which were financial failures at the time. During this time he became acquainted in socialist and literary circles and formed many valuable associations--among them, William Morris, Sidney Webb, Sidney Olivier, Edward Carpenter, William Archer, Hubert Bland, and others. Late in the 'eighties, through the patronage of Archer, Shaw began to write literary and artistic criticisms for "The World," and occasionally for the "Pall Mall Gazette" and "Truth." In 1888 he joined the editorial staff of the "Star," but because of his socialistic views and utterances was quickly transferred to the politically harmless position of writing a column of musical criticism. Later he became musical critic on "The World" where he created something of a sensation by lauding Wagner and

defying the academic school of British music. In 1895, when Mr. Frank Harris revived "The Saturday Review," Shaw became dramatic critic--a position which he held until 1898. At that time he left the "Review" and devoted his time to the writing of plays.

If we are to understand and appreciate Shaw's work, we must first understand his attitude towards it, and towards the theatre. He believes sincerely that the theatre, properly used, exerts a tremendous influence upon the ideas, character, and conduct of man. And as the church seems to be losing its effectiveness, and the universities appear dedicated to conservatism, the playhouse holds a place apart as an instructive and didactic institution. In Shaw's opinion it is, and should be, a "factory of thought, a prompter of conscience, an elucidator of social conduct, and armory against despair and dullness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man."

Because of his wit and humor, many people have refused to take Shaw seriously. His levity, his apparent inconsistencies, and his effect of superficial brilliance lead them to believe that he has no organized philosophy, and nothing worth while to say. In reply, Shaw with characteristic irreverence, has said: "The apostolic succession from Eschylus to myself is as serious and as continuously inspired as

that younger institution, the apostolic succession of the Christian Church. Unfortunately this Christian Church, founded gaily with a pun, has been so largely corrupted by rank satanism that it has become the Church where you must not laugh; and so it is giving way to the older and greater Church to which I belong: the Church where the oftener you laugh the better, because by laughter only can you destroy evil without malice, and affirm good-fellowship without mawkishness."

The keynote of the philosophy of Shaw, and the thesis of his plays, is that there are certain misconceptions which we must get rid of before progress is possible. Archibald Henderson seems to have realized and expressed this better than any other critic. "The prime fact," he says, "which stamps Shaw's art into close correspondence with life is the fundamental note of disillusionment which is struck fearlessly and unfailingly throughout the entire range of his work. . . . A profound student of human existence through actual contact with many diverse forms of life as it is actually lived today, and a philosopher as well, with a powerful imaginative grasp of social and sociological forms, Shaw sees that progress is possible only through the persistent discovery of mistaken conceptions of life and of society. . . . It is against these individual and social illusions, treach-

erous, ensnaring, destructive--prejudices, conventions, traditions, theological incrustations, social petrifications--that Shaw brings to bear all the force of his trenchant and sagacious intellect. He sees the individual involved in the social complex, and powerless, as an individual, to remedy his lot. He sees in money the basis of modern society, and attributes the slavery of the workers and of women to the omnipotence of capitalized wealth. Modern society represents that phase in social evolution which history will classify as the age of the exploitation of man by man. Social determinism is the most tragic fact of contemporary life; and individual liberty, in most cases, amounts to little more than a political fiction. Women, in marriage, is still the slave of man; and romance is only the pleasing illusion which masks the relentless functioning of the Life Force. Laugh as sardonically as we may, we cannot blink the fact that Trench is powerless to resist the Sartorius Idea, that Mrs. Warren is the victim of social extremity rather than the instrument of sexual passion, that Julia is the slave of a social convention. Barbara refuses longer to be the dupe of subsidized religion; Tanner is strong minded enough for self-contempt in the disillusioning discovery of that 'vital lie,' romance; and Candida clarifies the preference of 'natural instinct' to 'duty' as a guide to conduct. Shaw's characters, whether involved in social labyrinths or con-

fused by conventional dogmas, break through to the light by discovering their false allegiance to some stupid current fiction or some baseless fabric of cheap romance. Gloria's armor of 'Twentieth Century Education' crumples up before the simple attacks of natural impulse; Judith Anderson's larmoyant sentiment is dashed by the Nietzschean frankness of Dick Dudgeon; and Brassbound recoils from himself in disgust in the realization of the romantic puerility of his twopenny colored ideas of revenge. Shaw has freed himself from the illusions of patriotism and fidelity to English social forms; and he boasts that he is a 'good European' in the Nietzschean sense--the true cosmopolitan in ideas. Like Maurice Barres and Max Stirner, he is a fearless champion of the Ego; and his realism, like that of Ibsen and of Stendhal, is the realism of the disillusionist."

Let us look at some of these illusions that Shaw points out. The misconception of history and this historical hero are shown in "The Man of Destiny," "Caesar and Cleopatra," and "Saint Joan"; of revenge in "Caesar and Cleopatra" and "Captain Brassbound's Conversion"; of warfare in "The Man of Destiny," "Arms and the Man," and "Major Barbara"; and of duty in "The Man of Destiny," "Man and Superman," "Candida," "Widowers' Houses," and "Mrs. Warren's Profession."

In "Man and Superman," he satirizes our misconceptions

of love and marriage. Shaw holds that love is instinctive and cosmic and not individual, and that there is a "Life Force" which is seeking through man to evolve a higher order of being. The same idea is further developed in the later work "Back to Methuselah." "Getting Married" presents his theory of divorce.

In several plays Shaw has attacked things in themselves rather than our misconceptions of them. In "John Bull's Other Island," he satirizes nationalities, and in "The Doctor's Dilemma," professions. "Widowers' Houses," "Mrs. Warren's Profession," and "Major Barbara" deal with the problems of poverty and tainted money.

Some critics hold that Shaw's later work, in general, is inferior to that done during his earlier periods. Writing for an audience that has come to expect him to do the unexpected, his later plays are brilliant, but often insignificant. Shaw instinctively aligns himself with the minority in any question. If the majority should suddenly swing to his side, he would undoubtedly change his position. Likewise, he believes that the only way to make people notice any particular problem is to present an unc customary point of view of customary things. Consequently he has often presented a "topsy turvy world."

Perhaps Shaw's greatest fault as a dramatist is the cold intellectuality of his plays. He scorns emotion and

does not believe in poetry. Great drama is made up of great characters and great emotions. Shaw's works have no emotion, and very few of his people even approach. He is a brilliant dramatist but not a great one.

In conclusion we might quote Walter Prichard Eaton, who in his "The Drama in English" says: "If it were necessary to try to pack Shaw into a sentence, we might say that he is a combination of Ibsen's philosophic and social purpose, Wycherley's mordant satire, and Congreve's glittering wit. Which, after all, wouldn't mean much of anything. Shaw is Shaw. He is unique."

The work of H. Granville Barker shows the influence of Shaw more clearly than does that of any other modern dramatist. His indebtedness is most apparent in the Shavian wit of his dialogue. Barker's chief contribution, if it is a contribution, lies in his experiment in form. He has sought to develop a less rigid and more realistic dramatic structure. The result is often mere confusion.

"The Madras House," Barker's best known play, is a satire on business and sex, presented along with a gallery of family portraits. "The Voysey Inheritance" relates the struggle of Edward Voysey to clean up the crooked business he has inherited from his father. Like Ibsen, Barker warns us against the blind following of set formulas of conduct. In

"Waste" a man's casual relations with a worthless woman wreck his life and causes him to commit suicide. It is probably Barker's most powerful drama.

John Galsworthy is one of the keenest and most dispassionate observers of modern life. In addition he is an excellent playwright. His plays, like his novels, show a serene detachment, a high sense of balance and form, and an absolute lack of partisanship. He never becomes angry, never preaches, and never crusades for a cause. He merely presents without comment a picture of life with its ironia cruelty, futility, and injustice. His plots work out with all the smoothness of a mathematic formula. In fact they sometimes move so smoothly that they are not quite convincing.

Probably Galsworthy's greatest weakness is that he is a literary man and not a man of the theatre. He fails to understand that there is a difference between crowd and individual psychology, and that one must use a different technique and a different method of appeal when he is writing a play for a theatre full of people than when he is writing a novel for one person. This is the reason why many of his plays read better than they play.

"Justice" relates the story of William Falder, junior clerk in the firm of James and Walter How, who raises a

check from nine to ninety pounds so that he can elope with the woman he loves, thus rescuing her from her brutal and drunken husband. He is arrested and sent to prison where he nearly loses his mind, although the prison officials say that he is in good health. When he is released, he is unable to hold a job because he has been in prison, and because he feels that people are "down on him." He finally goes to his former employers and they offer to take him back if he will give up the woman. When officers come to arrest him for not reporting to the court and for forging references, he jumps from the stairs and kills himself. Galsworthy does not make out that the courts, the prison officials, or the employer are villains. All are well meaning. Falder committed a crime and deserved to be punished. And yet, the state and society killed William Falder for a matter of eighty-one pounds. Society in general and the law-courts in particular have been unable to meet individual human problems.

"Strife" presents a picture of struggle between capital and labor. A strike is in progress at the Trenartha Tin Plate Works. The strikers are led by Having Roberts, and the capitalists by John Anthony, chairman of the board of directors. A series of conferences take place in which both sides present their claims. Both sides are willing to make concessions, but are prevented from doing so by the de-

termination of their respective leaders. Finally, Robert's wife dies from starvation rather than accept charity from Anthony's daughter. The strikers yield, and the board of directors over-ride Anthony and vote to leave the whole matter to the union leader. As a consequence both sides accept the terms that had been drawn up and presented before the fight began. The play presents the futility but inevitability of conflict between capital and labor under existing conditions. As in all plays, Galsworthy suggests no solution, but allows both sides to express their views.

"The Silver Box" is the only play in which Galsworthy takes sides. A rich man and a poor man commit the same crime. The rich man's money gets him off, while the poor man is sent to prison. "Call this justice?" he cries: "What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse . . . but it's 'is money got 'im off--justice!"

In "Loyalties" the theme is that loyalty to race, class, and clan is stronger than justice and right. At a house party at the country place of Charles Winsor, Ferdinand De Levis, wealthy Jew, is robbed of one thousand pounds. He accuses young Captain Dancy. The rest of the party, of course, stand back of their countryman, and advise De Levis to drop the matter. The Jew refuses and Dancy, on advice of his friends, takes action to clear his name. When some marked notes appear that make it evident that the captain

was the thief, the case blows up. Dancy's friends arrange for him to escape, but when the officer comes to arrest him, he commits suicide. It is a carefully constructed, nicely balanced, dramatic discussion.

"Escape," Galsworthy's last play, is a study of the reaction of various classes of English society to an escaped convict who happens to be a gentleman. Matt Denant in an argument with a policeman knocks the officer down, accidentally killing him. A year later Matt determines to escape from Dartmoor prison where he is detained. He gets away, and in his flight encounters many persons from all strata of society. Their reactions to him are varied: those from his own class are inclined to give him a sporting chance; those from the lower classes, to run him down. A person finally hides him in a church, but he gives himself up so that the clergyman will not be forced to lie to protect him.

Three other plays might be mentioned briefly. "The Mob" pictures a society that drives a man to his death, and then ten years later worships his image. It is theatrically unconvincing. "The Fugitive" tells the story of Clare, a sensitive well-bred woman, who drifts from her husband and finally commits suicide rather than support herself by prostitution. "The Pigeon" is a satire on organized charity.

Galsworthy's dramas probably have no lasting value. They are significant, however, as pictures of modern society.

They are not dramatically great because the characters have little souls and are unable to carry on intense dramatic conflict.

AMERICA

Before 1915, the American drama had little to commend it. Clyde Fitch was the best known and most highly praised playwright, and although his plays, "The Truth" and "The City," contained considerable surface realism and successfully introduced social satire, they are largely forgotten today. William Vaughn Moody in "The Great Divide" made a rather unconvincing study of Eastern conservatism and Western liberalism. George Ade and George M. Cohan wrote smart but totally insignificant entertainments for the stage.

With the founding of Little Theatre in Chicago in 1913, the organization of the Provincetown Players, the Washington Square Players, and the Neighborhood Players in 1915, and with the first public performance of O'Neill's plays in 1916, modern American drama began to emerge. Since 1915 the growth of the Little Theatre movement in America has been phenomenal. The Theatre Guild growing out of the Washington Square Players has proved that an artistic non-commercial group can be financially successful.

By far the most significant modern American playwright,

and the only one who deserves to be called a great dramatist, is Eugene Gladstone O'Neill. Born in New York in 1888, the son of James O'Neill, the famous actor, Eugene was educated at private schools and spent one year at Princeton. After a period of wandering during which he twice went to sea, he returned to the United States, worked as a newspaper reporter, and spent six months in a tuberculosis sanitarium. It was here that he wrote his first plays. Later he studied under Professor Baker at Harvard, and the next year joined the Provincetown Players who made possible the first New York performance of his work.

His first plays were one-acts dealing with the sea. "Ile," "Bound East for Cardiff," and "The Moon of the Caribbees" are the best of this group and are notable for their naturalism. "Beyond the Horizon," his first long play, was produced on Broadway in 1920, and won for him the Pulitzer prize. It is a moving tragedy of frustration and defeat.

In "The Emperor Jones," O'Neill turns from naturalism to symbolism and expressionism. Brutus Jones has made himself emperor of an island, and scorns the "bush niggers" who are the native inhabitants of the place. When they revolt he starts off through the woods to escape. Each successive scene shows his rising terror and his inability to escape from the heritage of his race. He finally returns to the place that he started from, having made a circle in the for-

est, and is shot down by the natives. The effect of the whole piece is made more intense by the impressive use of the tom-tom off stage.

"Anna Christie" although popular is not particularly significant. In it O'Neill uses the sea symbolically. "The Hairy Ape" is the tragedy of Yank, a stoker, who has had his self-confidence shattered, and who attempts to understand the present day complicated social system. The whole drama is expressionistic, and the last scene, in the gorilla cage, is sheer, and probably too obvious, symbolism. "All God's Chillun Got Wings" is the unsentimental tragedy of a Negro married to a white girl.

In "The Hairy Ape," O'Neill made use of masks to make his characters on Fifth Avenue all look alike. In "The Great God Brown," he uses them to express the dual nature of his characters. The result is too intricate and bewildering to be especially effective. In "Lazarus Laughed," which deals with the life of Lazarus after his return from the grave, masks are employed to get various effects from his choruses.

"Marco Millions" is a satire. Marco is a typical Babbitt--a western hustler who is unable to understand or appreciate the mystery and beauty, and the philosophic calm of the east. "Dynamo," which failed on the stage but was a best seller as a book, indicates the search for new gods by the

generation that is the product of the machine-age.

In 1924, Clayton Hamilton, in a lecture at Columbia University, said, "I have said that Mr. O'Neill's career is still in the crescent stage; but I have no idea of what he will endeavor to accomplish in the future. He can't go on forever writing about roughnecks in the fore-castle and wass-trels in the water-front saloon. He will have to broaden his horizon and make some new discovery in life. . . I really wonder what would happen if he should adopt my suggestion to run up the ladder of civilization and investigate the lives of people who put on clean collars twice a day."

O'Neill did "run up the ladder of civilization," and "Strange Interlude" was the result. This nine-act drama is notable for its Freudian psychology and for its use of the aside to express the inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. Nina Leeds has been thwarted in love by her father's selfishness and by the war. Later, she finds in each of three lovers certain qualities possessed by her dead "ideal mate."

In "Mourning Becomes Electra," O'Neill has taken the Greek story of Electra, has brought it down to the time of the Civil war, and has added all the trappings of Freudianism. It is usually considered his greatest play.

In his next play he surprised everyone by writing a

comedy, "Ah, Wilderness." Whether, for the first time in his life, he was writing with the box-office in mind, or whether, likewise for the first time in his life, he was attempting to answer the critics who said that he could not draw normal and sane people, it is hard to say. It is the sympathetic study of a sensitive boy in the midst of a fond but rather insensitive family, who are somewhat concerned when they find him reading Swinburne, Ibsen, Wilde, and "The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam." With George M. Cohan in one of the leading roles, the play was an immense success.

In his latest play, "Days Without End," O'Neill again returns to the use of the mask to present duality of character. After a long struggle with his "other self," John Livingston at last finds peace, harmony, and integration in the church. The catholic press hailed the play as O'Neill's return to the fold. In reality, it seems the weakest thing he has written in some time.

It may be that Eugene O'Neill has been over-rated. His plays are sensationally different from the ordinary run, and, in America at least, we are apt to mistake the unusual for the great. Frank W. Chandler has pointed out that: "Many who feel his power, however, deny him place among the truly great writers. They point out the absence of normal, healthy sane people in his plays; his magnifying dramatic irony into a scourging sadism; his inability to endow his characters

with genuine humanity and passion; his light without sweetness--in general, his failure to see life steadily and whole. Some critics even ridicule his use of masks, asides, tom-toms, etc., branding them tricks of a showman afraid of unadorned drama. Many deny that his tragedies are moving or lifting--but assert that they are sheer melodrama with Freudian decorations."

It seems probable that as O'Neill is still a comparatively young man, his best plays are yet to be written. His latest two plays, although inferior to many of his others, do show a tendency to get away from psychological abnormalities and to "see life steadily and whole."

O'Neill is the only first-rate dramatist that America has produced. Of those of second magnitude, there is a multitude: all of them excellent playwrights, but all of them falling short of greatness. We can mention only a few of them. Susan Glaspell has written profound psychological plays that, for the most part, are too literary for the average audience. They read better than they play, and are, perhaps, better known to the reading public than to the theatre-goers. Her best works are "The Verge," "The Inheritance," and "Alison's House." Maxwell Anderson, sometimes collaborating with Laurence Stallings or Harold Hickerson, has portrayed various aspects of American life and character in "What Price Glory," "Outside Looking In," "Gods of the

Lightning," "Saturday's Children," "Gypsy," and "Both Your Houses." George Kelly has written two fine dramas in "The Show-Off" and "Craig's Wife." Philip Barry writes brilliant comedies with serious implication, among the best of which are "You and I," "Paris Bound," and "The Animal Kingdom." Elmer Rice has written the expressionistic "The Adding Machine," the Pulitzer prize play, "Street Scene," and the angry protest, "We, The People." Paul Green has portrayed the southern mountaineer in "In Abraham's Bosom" and "The Field God." George S. Kaufmann, working with Marc Connelly, Edna Ferber, Moss Hart, and Morrie Ryskind, has satirized many American institutions and activities. Among the most brilliant are, "To the Ladies," "Merton of the Movies," "Beggar on Horseback," "Once in a Lifetime," and "Of Thee I Sing." Sydney Howard has written several psychological studies, the best of which is "The Silver Cord." There are many more names that could be mentioned, among them Rachel Crothers, Rose Franken, George Abbott, Martin Flavin, and S. N. Behrman.

The American drama has been hampered by the lack of a critical and appreciative audience. Most Americans go to the theatre to be entertained and not to be inspired or instructed. If the play offers any ideas at all they must serve to confirm rather than change those held by the spectators. In short, drama in America has been forced to follow rather than lead public opinion.

CONCLUSIONS

There have been two chief lines of development in the drama of social criticism. Although Ibsen dealt with problems of society, he was careful never to let the problem become more important than the individual. As Chandler has pointed out: "In all his dealings with institutions, Ibsen kept his eyes fixed upon the individual. In writing 'An Enemy of the People,' for example, it was not his purpose to expose the mismanagement responsible for the infection of the water-pipes at a bathing resort. He desired rather to show the need, everywhere and always, for individual integrity in combating the selfish majority. Any other instance might have served his purpose as well. So, in his treatment of commercial and political hypocrisy and marital infelicity, Ibsen was intent upon declaring the need for regeneration in the individual soul, rather than upon assailing or proposing to alter laws for marriage, government, or business." Many later dramatists, however, have focused their attention upon the problem, with the result that it becomes more important than the soul.

The essential difference lies in the conception of the center of dramatic conflict. One group, following Ibsen, has placed the conflict within the individual--a conflict of

the soul; the other has placed it without--a conflict between the individual and some institution. The one group has given us the psychological drama; the other was purely social play. The former has the possibility of being artistic; the latter is nearly always merely didactic.

It is practically impossible for the strictly social play to be great drama, chiefly because its characters are usually not great. Stern Jameson in discussing the effect of the conception of democracy upon the modern drama says: "Dramatically speaking, souls are not equal, 'Sublimity,' said Longinus, the master, 'is the echo of a great soul. . . . For it is not possible that men with mean and servile ideas and aims prevailing throughout their lives should produce anything worthy of immortality.' Mr. Galsworthy's 'Justice' is not a great tragedy, for Falder is a feeble soul. Sudermann's 'Heimat' is commonplace because Magda is a poseur. D'Annunzio's 'Sogno d'un tramonto d'Autunno' is glorious melodrama because Fantea is just the usual type of beautiful harlot. The life and death of little folk do not make a drama which inspires by the realization of a fuller life. . . . They do not fulfill the essential of the great drama, that it should perfect life, making human existence an inspiration, and not a wail or a bad joke."

If we are to expect great drama in the future, we must look to those authors who, with a background of modern psy-

chology, look deeply into the human soul. Especially should we remember this in America, where, with the possible exception of Eugene O'Neill, our dramatists, when they have written social drama at all, have concerned themselves principally with problems and abuses to the exclusion of character.

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